



State of South Carolina Office of the Governor

MARK SANFORD
GOVERNOR

POST OFFICE BOX 12267
COLUMBIA 29211

May 28, 2010

The Honorable André Bauer
President of the Senate
State House, First Floor, East Wing
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Mr. President and Members of the Senate:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval S. 1190, R. 227, a Joint Resolution which allows Richland County to use accommodations tax revenue to continue paying its loan on the Pineview Road tract that was previously to be used for the new State Farmers' Market.

Before we explain the grounds for our veto, it is necessary to establish the background for this Joint Resolution. Richland County purchased the Pineview Road property as part of a plan to move the State Farmers' Market from its current location next to Williams-Brice Stadium. To pay for the loan, Richland County was permitted to use revenue from its accommodations tax because the Farmers' Market was sufficiently tourism-related.

Unfortunately for Richland County, poor decision-making on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, the General Assembly and even Richland County led the state to ultimately change its plans and relocate the new Farmers' Market to a location in Lexington County instead. Because of this decision, Richland County was left with a piece of property it no longer needed and a large loan that it could no longer pay from the accommodations tax revenue. Richland County sued both the state and the Department of Agriculture for failure to keep their ends of the bargain. As part of a settlement agreement to dispose of that lawsuit, most of the Pineview Road tract was transferred to the South Carolina Research Authority (SCRA) – purportedly for use as an industrial park – which is decidedly not tourism-related.

This Joint Resolution allows Richland County to continue to use the accommodations tax to pay off the loan for the property, even though that use is outside the permissive uses of the accommodations tax.

Let us be clear, the original decision to move the Farmers' Market was rushed – and the taxpayers suffered the consequences for the poor decision making. While it has long been our

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belief that the best move for taxpayers would have been to leave it where it is – and while we have voted accordingly in Budget and Control Board meetings, we lost that battle.

However, two wrongs do not make a right. Asking taxpayers in Richland County, who have already spent enough of their hard-earned money on this debacle, to fork out more money to cover the misguided efforts that led to this failed venture we believe would be bad policy. Fortunately, the taxpayers have an out: SCRA. Since the SCRA now owns the property and will supposedly develop an industrial park, we do not believe it is unreasonable for SCRA to pay off this loan and spare the taxpayers any further expense.

While the taxpayers will not ultimately receive any benefit from the millions spent on this failed project, ideally the experience will lead state officials to make more prudent decisions when spending taxpayer money.

For these reasons, I am vetoing and returning without my approval S. 1190, R. 227.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Sanford', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mark Sanford